



la Convention
de la Baie James
et du Nord québécois

Comité d'examen des répercussions sur l'environnement et le milieu social

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MINUTES OF THE

415th MEETING OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

(Adopted)

DATE:	June 28, 2023
PLACE:	Video conference (Teams)
PRESENT:	Daniel Berrouard, Québec Robert Joly, Québec Lucas Del Vecchio, CNG Sophie Cooper, Executive Secretary
ABSENT:	Luc Lainé, Chairman John Paul Murdoch, CNG

1) Call to order and adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

2) Adoption of the minutes of the 414th meeting

The minutes of the 414th meeting were adopted as presented.

Action: Translate and file the 414th meeting minutes

3) Correspondence and follow-up action

Correspondence and follow-up action from May 25 to June 28, 2023, are presented in Appendix A.

4) Eastmain-1-A and Rupert River diversion project
Ref. No.: 3214-10-017

a) Small mammal monitoring report, 2016-2017

WHEREAS on January 14, 2020, the Review Committee (COMEX) received, for information purposes, the 2017 small mammal monitoring report for the Eastmain-1-A hydroelectric development project. The monitoring was a requirement of condition 5.17 of the certificate of authorization issued on November 24, 2006, and condition 1 of the amended certificate of authorization issued on July 28, 2008.

The general monitoring objective was to conduct two consecutive inventories (2016 and 2017) of small mammals on the edges of the Rupert diversion bays and in the enhanced and seeded wetlands in the Rupert diversion bays and river. The inventory covered all confirmed or potentially present small mammal species in the study area. Special attention was given to two special status species potentially present or confirmed present in the study area: the rock vole and the southern bog lemming. The specific monitoring objectives were to evaluate the abundance of the different small mammal species in the study area, compare the numbers between the two consecutive inventories (2016 and 2017) to account for year-to-year variability, compare the results against the draft design study, and validate the anticipated impacts.

Only one special status species was sighted during the monitoring campaigns, namely the southern bog lemming (2 individuals), in 2016. In addition, the 10 species reported across the study area were the same as those reported in the 2002 draft design study. Overall, small mammal populations affected by habitat loss seem to have found suitable habitat on the periphery of the Rupert diversion bays, as the population of several species is stable or even bigger than before impoundment. Regarding species whose numbers have declined, the monitoring report mentions that it is hard to say whether the cause is a period of low density, trouble detecting species, or habitat changes linked to forest fires or diversion bay impoundment. The enhanced wetlands also seem to attract small

mammals. The seeded areas of the Rupert River have generally created suitable habitat for these animals.

WHEREAS the COMEX members reviewed the document submitted by the proponent and consider that the monitoring objectives were achieved, COMEX has no comments to submit at this time.

#2023-0628-01: *write to the Provincial Administrator to inform her that the COMEX members reviewed the document submitted by the proponent and have no comments to submit at this time.*

Action: Write to the Provincial Administrator

b) Short-eared owl and Bonaparte's gull monitoring report, 2017

WHEREAS on January 14, 2020, the Review Committee (COMEX) received, for information purposes, the 2017 short-eared owl and Bonaparte's gull monitoring report for the Eastmain-1-A hydroelectric development project. The monitoring was a requirement of condition 5.1 of the certificate of authorization issued on November 24, 2006, and condition 1 of the amended certificate of authorization issued on July 28, 2008.

The short-eared owl is the only special status species confirmed to nest in the marshes of the Rupert River diversion bays. The Bonaparte's gull is not listed as a special status species at either the federal or provincial level. However, the impact assessment anticipated a risk of nesting habitat loss for both species, particularly in peatlands in the Rupert diversion bays.

The monitoring objectives were to count nests, individuals, and breeding pairs for each species in these peatlands, verify known nesting sites (new and old), identify the presence of short-eared owl using broadcast calls, conduct an inventory of peatlands offering suitable nesting habitat for the Bonaparte's gull, and determine the abundance of small mammals (prey for the short-eared owl) in peatlands in the Rupert diversion bays.

Monitoring observations indicate that habitat use by the short-eared owl is linked to peak abundance of small mammal populations in the study area. The absence of short-eared owl in 2012, followed by sightings of 10 individuals in 2015 and then no nests or sightings in 2017 points to opportunistic nomadic behaviour in this population of short-eared owl compared to other populations. Overall, the monitoring results for 2012-2017 suggest that short-eared owl populations during the operation phase are the same as before the project. The interannual fluctuations observed since 2003 are apparently normal for this species whose breeding populations are closely tied to cyclical prey abundance.

The 2017 monitoring results show that the size of the Bonaparte's gull breeding population is virtually the same as before the project. The report concludes that

impoundment of the Rupert diversion bays has not affected the size of the breeding population and that the impact on the population is negligible.

WHEREAS the COMEX members reviewed the document submitted by the proponent and consider that the monitoring objectives were achieved, COMEX has no comments to submit at this time.

#2023-0628-02: *write to the Provincial Administrator to inform her that the COMEX members reviewed the document submitted by the proponent and have no comments to submit at this time.*

Action: Write to the Provincial Administrator

c) Waterfowl monitoring report, 2017

WHEREAS on January 14, 2020, the Review Committee (COMEX) received, for information purposes, the 2017 waterfowl monitoring report for the Eastmain-1-A hydroelectric development project. The monitoring was a requirement of conditions 5.10 and 5.11 of the certificate of authorization issued on November 24, 2006, and condition 1 of the amended certificate of authorization issued on July 28, 2008.

The general objective of the waterfowl monitoring program was to determine waterfowl breeding pair abundance and clutch size in the Rupert diversion bays as to verify the accuracy of the anticipated impacts of the project on breeding pairs, as well as to evaluate the presence of waterfowl in the diversion bays and their use of the wildlife enhancements. The specific monitoring objectives in 2017 were to determine waterfowl density and numbers in the Rupert diversion bays during the nesting and brood-rearing period, compare the results against the 2009, 2011 and 2014 monitoring results, verify the accuracy of the anticipated impacts on waterfowl breeding pairs in the Rupert diversion bays relative to the 2002-2007 baseline data, and assess use of the three wildlife enhancements (Jolly bay, disposal area AR-16 and pond 48B) by Canada geese during migration and by waterfowl during nesting and brood-rearing.

In 2017, the abundance of individuals, breeding pairs and clutches in the Rupert diversion bays exceeded the baseline (2002-2007). The impact assessment anticipated that creation of the diversion bays would benefit certain diving duck species, particularly the common merganser. However, common merganser breeding pair and clutch sizes have declined. By contrast, the American black duck and the green-winged teal were the most abundant waterfowl species in the Rupert diversion bays, in terms of both breeding pairs and clutches, in both 2014 and 2017. The sharp increase in American black duck and green-winged teal breeding pair and clutch sizes and the decline in common merganser breeding pair and clutch sizes are the primary changes since the 2002-2007 baseline study.

Canada goose numbers in the Rupert diversion bays were higher in 2017 (47 breeding pairs) than in 2014 (23 breeding pairs). However, the number of breeding pairs had declined by 21% since the 2002-2007 baseline study (59.5 breeding pairs), whereas the number of clutches had increased by 280% in the Rupert diversion bays (19 clutches in 2017 versus 5 clutches in 2002-2007). These results point to increased use of the Rupert diversion bays by Canada geese for brood-rearing compared to previous monitoring years.

WHEREAS the COMEX members reviewed the document submitted by the proponent and consider that the monitoring objectives were achieved. They were informed that Hydro-Québec was planning to conduct a final monitoring campaign in summer 2023. COMEX has no comments to submit at this time and is waiting to receive the 2023 waterfowl monitoring report.

#2023-0628-03: *write to the Provincial Administrator to inform her that the COMEX members reviewed the document submitted by the proponent and are waiting to receive the 2023 waterfowl monitoring report before submitting any comments.*

Action: Write to the Provincial Administrator

5) Other business

a. New chair appointed to the Cree-Québec Forestry Board (CQFB)

On June 19, 2023, COMEX received a letter announcing the appointment of Ronald Brizard as chair of the Cree-Québec Forestry Board. Cabinet made the appointment on May 17, 2023. COMEX will write to Mr. Brizard to congratulate him and invite him to meet with Luc Lainé.

Action: Write to Ronald Brizard

b. Annual Report 2022-2023

The members approved COMEX's 2022-2023 annual report. The report will be translated into English prior to official transmission to the administrators in late July 2023.

Action: Send the 2022-2023 annual report translation

c. Forest roads H and I: Under review

COMEX will contact the MELCFFP analysts for clarification regarding the impact of forest fires on logging activities and protected areas for caribou. The committee will continue reviewing the project once it has received this information.

d. Moblan Lithium Project, Sayona Nord

A project update describing the changes made by the new proponent, Sayona Nord, will be sent to COMEV, following which the updated impact assessment will be submitted to COMEX for review.

a. Projects on the agenda for the meetings scheduled for summer 2023

- James Bay Lithium Mine Project, Galaxy Lithium Inc.
 - Drafting of the review report
- Eastmain-1-A and Rupert diversion project
- Windfall mining project
- Quarry project near the La Grande-3 hydroelectric development

6) Next meeting

The next meeting of COMEX will be held on July 27, 2023, by video conference.

Appendix A					
Correspondence and follow-up: May 25 to June 28, 2023					
Project	From	To	Document	Date	Action - Comments
Quarry project near the La Grande-3 hydroelectric development, Hydro-Québec Ref. No.: 3214-03-045	François-Pierre Gaudreault Hydro-Québec	Marie-Josée Lizotte Deputy Minister MELCCFP	Additional information (answers to questions and comments)	Sent: June 2, 2023	<i>For recommendation</i>
	Mélissa Gagnon MELCCFP	Luc Lainé COMEX		Sent: June 12, 2023 Received by COMEX: June 13, 2023	
James Bay Lithium Mine Project, Allkem/Galaxy Lithium Ref. No.: 3214-14-055	Luc Lainé COMEX	Marie-Josée Lizotte Deputy Minister MELCCFP	Request for additional information (duty to inform the communities concerned and commitments)	Sent: June 15, 2023 Acknowledgement of receipt: June 15, 2023	<i>For recommendation</i>
	Maud Ablain MELCCFP	Denis Couture Galaxy Lithium		Sent: June 20, 2023 Received by COMEX: June 20, 2023	
Eastmain-1-A and Rupert diversion project, Hydro-Québec, Ref. No.: 3214-10-017	Mélissa Gagnon MELCCFP	Marie-Josée Grimard Hydro-Québec	Request for additional information (follow-up on conditions of the CA)	Sent: June 19, 2023 Received by COMEX: June 19, 2023	<i>For information</i>
Cree-Québec Forestry Board (CQFB)	Patrick Léveillé-Perreault CQFB	Sophie Cooper COMEX	Announcement of the appointment of a new chair to the CQFB	Sent: June 18, 2023 Received by COMEX: June 19, 2023	<i>For information</i>
Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (DGÉES)	Mélissa Gagnon MELCCFP	Luc Lainé COMEX	Restructuring announcement - Direction générale de l'évaluation environnementale et stratégique	Sent: June 20, 2023 Received by COMEX: June 20, 2023	<i>For information</i>